



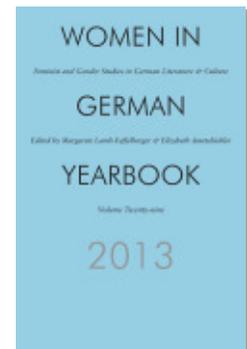
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Editors' Introduction

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Editors' Introduction

The month of July is dedicated to putting the final polish on the manuscript of the *Women in German Yearbook* and writing its introduction. This is difficult work, to be sure, but it is also a pleasurable task because as editors, we enjoy the privilege of being the first to read the *Yearbook* from cover to cover. And volume 29 is a good read. It contains seven articles, five of which constitute the Focus section, titled "Around 1800." These studies introduce and analyze texts in a variety of genres (prose, poetry, drama, and travelogue) written by German women in the late eighteenth and early to mid-nineteenth centuries when it was widely believed—especially following the publication of Rousseau's *Emile* in 1762—that biology dictated the nature of woman. European societies assumed that women were intellectually inferior to men and put the emphasis for the *Bildung* (education) of middle- and upper-class women on training them in so-called accomplishments, such as music, dance, and drawing, so that they would attract a suitor and fulfill their destiny of marriage and motherhood. While men controlled and participated in the public sphere of politics, business, and artistic achievement, women were restricted to the private sphere of home and family. The doctrine of separate spheres put the writing woman in direct conflict with her social role.

While women's ambition to write was frowned upon, a notable number of women entered the literary marketplace around 1800 and achieved success in a profession that continued to be dominated by men. It was also a time of great political and social change. Nationalism and imperial expansion, revolution and war, industrial progress and labor protests forged modern Europe; and the making of modern Europe was also the making of modern woman (Abrams, 2002).

The Focus section includes five studies that deal with the writings of such enlightened modern women as Sophie von La Roche (1730–1807), Caroline Auguste Fischer (1764–1842), Sophie Mereau-Brentano (1770–

1806), Friederike Brun (1765–1835), Elise Bürger (1769–1833), Ida Pfeiffer (1797–1858), Ida von Hahn-Hahn (1805–80), and Luise Mühlbach (1814–73). Informed by the paradigms of new historicism and post-colonial and gender theories, these studies examine the role of *Bildung* in the context of the eighteenth-century cultural discourse of “Otherness”; analyze the era’s gender ideology and its repressive authority over both women and men; illustrate the tension between the women writers’ ambition for recognition and influence and the restrictions imposed on them by gender; and reveal female cultural agency and feminine subjectivity as a sense of self.

In the first of the five articles in the Focus section, Christine Lehleiter studies, within the context of the *Bildungsroman*, the conceptualization of female selfhood in Sophie von La Roche’s novel *The History of Lady Sternheim* (1776, *Die Geschichte des Fräulein von Sternheim* [1771]). This novel, a sensation during its time, is representative of the Enlightenment and sentimentalism (*Empfindsamkeit*) movements and is valued as a foundational text for the German female literary tradition. The contemporary notion of the “beautiful soul” (*schöne Seele*)—utilized in Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* (*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* [1795–96]) to serve as a catalyst for men on their educational journey toward harmonious maturation—influenced La Roche’s conceptualization of Lady Sternheim and the message that the heroine embodies: virtue, charity, and truth triumph over self-love. Drawing on the idea of a formative force, Lehleiter argues that female writers around 1800 conceptualized a self that did not need outside stimulus for its development because it originated from within. Moreover, La Roche’s novel offers an alternative concept for *Bildung*, namely, performance. Lehleiter highlights La Roche’s focus on performativity and draws helpful conclusions for the construction of female selfhood within the context of the *Bildungsroman*.

While La Roche was the sentimental Pietist who derived her “opportunities for cultural agency from the idea of the sensitive woman” (Dawson 115), Caroline Auguste Fischer (1764–1842) was the radical thinker who vehemently rejected the notion of “natural” femininity and masculinity. She rebelled against the contemporary constructs of femininity that included passivity, domesticity, and motherhood. Fischer found marriage and motherhood unsatisfactory (she divorced twice) and thus wrote against society’s dicta for gender division: man’s privileged social position and its devastating consequences for female self-realization. Fischer’s four novels are the focus of Viktoria Harms’s paper titled “Sympathy

for a Villain? Suffering Men and Angelic Women” in which she examines Fischer’s curiosity about how masculinity is constructed. Harms demonstrates persuasively that many of Fischer’s male characters are not scoundrels driven by egotistical attitudes as they search for joy in life and love but, just like the women of their time, fall victim to the prevailing repressive gender ideology.

In the third article of the Focus section, Lena Heilmann, like Lehleiter, explores issues of agency and the construction of gender in relation to performance. Her study concentrates on two lesser-known works: Sophie Mereau’s frivolous short story “Flight to the City” (1990, “Die Flucht nach der Hauptstadt” [1806]) and Elise Bürger’s one-act play *Die antike Statue aus Florenz* (1814, The antique statue from Florence). While Mereau’s tale is a parody of love and bourgeois marriage, Bürger’s play is a “gendered critique of Classicism, which she depicts as the inflexible, masculine opposite of a feminized aesthetic that gives free rein to imagination, feeling, and experimentation” (Dupree 113). By identifying moments of fear and anxiety and also by pursuing the male gaze, Heilmann convincingly demonstrates the connection between fear and performance in each text. Moreover, she illustrates how Mereau and Bürger employ the performative aspects of the relationship between man/husband and woman/wife so that the protagonists regain their lost agency.

The fourth and fifth articles in the Focus section deal with women’s travel writings. Travelogues written by women came into great fashion at the end of the eighteenth century, particularly by those readers who could not leave their domestic life behind but longed to learn about the exotic and extraordinary Other. Cindy K. Renker studies the writings—poetry, travelogues, and letters—by Friederike Brun (1765–1835), who was married to an affluent merchant in Copenhagen but spent twenty-one years (between 1789 and 1810) traveling in Switzerland, where she was a guest of the liberal writer Karl Viktor von Bonstetten (1745–1832), and in Italy, at times in the company of Princess Louisa of Anhalt-Dessau (1798–1858) and the Romantic poet Friedrich von Matthisson (1761–1831). Brun enjoyed a particularly close friendship with Madame de Staël (1766–1817) and befriended many leading European cultural figures, such as Goethe, Schiller, Herder, August Wilhelm Schlegel, and Wilhelm Grimm, with whom she kept up a prolific correspondence and who feature prominently in her travelogues. Renker’s study traces the gradually changing political attitude of this well-read and well-traveled woman.

Ulrike Brisson's article "Discovering Scheherazade," the last in the Focus section, discusses the travelogues of three women—the Austrian Ida Pfeiffer (1797–1858) and the Prussians Ida von Hahn-Hahn (1805–80) and Clara Mundt (1814–73), who wrote under the pseudonym Luise Mühlbach. These women, who spent extended time in the Middle East during the 1840s (Pfeiffer at age forty-five, Hahn-Hahn at thirty-eight), and in the 1860s and early 1870s (Mühlbach in her late fifties and early sixties), delivered detailed accounts of the lives of Oriental women. This was possible, Brisson explains, because Western women "could access places exclusive to women. They dropped in at private harems, Turkish baths, and semipublic female slave markets, all distinct Orientalist spaces inaccessible to [the] European male" (98). Brisson builds on Said's theory of Orientalism and utilizes two concepts that are pertinent to travel writing: the Other and the gaze. Her study is a thought-provoking exploration of how German female travel writers "either undermined or confirmed the oversimplified, male-generated" notions that prevailed at the time in order to "augment the social esteem of women at home" (98).

Volume 29 contains two additional articles—Claudia Winkler's examination of the blog *ein fremdwoerterbuch* by the young Turkish-German Kübra Gümüşay and Deborah Prager's investigation of Fontane's *Effi Briest* (1896). We placed these two articles as bookends before and after the Focus section, with Winkler's comprehensive analysis of Gümüşay's fascinating blog as the opening and Prager's insightful inquiry into Fontane's novel as the closing chapter of the *Yearbook*. Despite the obvious differences in genre and time of production, both texts—the blog and the novel, as well as their analyses by Winkler and Prager—correspond with each other in surprising and enlightening ways. While Prager analyzes Effi Briest's fascination with "all things Oriental" by investigating the "culturally mediated, socially accepted" discourse on the Orient in the nineteenth century (118), Winkler's study deals with the troubled image of Muslim women and Islam in today's Germany.¹

Kübra Gümüşay was born in Hamburg in 1988. Currently, she lives in the UK with her husband, who is a PhD student at the University of Oxford. Since 2008 she has been writing the blog *ein fremdwoerterbuch* "as a means to break [the] imposed silence and assert a space for herself in the public sphere as a Muslim woman against violence" (2). Gümüşay's activism on the Internet was prompted by an incident: she was accosted in the subway because she was wearing the hijab, the headscarf. In an interview in February 2012, she explains:

I asked myself how someone on the street who does not know me at all could call me a *Schleiereule* (literally: “veiled owl,” the German name for the barn owl)? Where do these prejudices come from? For me, one answer was that there are a great many parallel societies all living side by side and hardly communicating with one another. [. . .] In my blog, I would like to break down the stereotypes that have built up over a period of years. What is simpler than to dip into the world of a Muslim girl in Germany at the click of a mouse?²

Between April 2010 and June 2013, Gümüşay wrote the biweekly column “Das Tuch” (The headscarf) for the *Tageszeitung* (*taz*) and thus became Germany’s first hijabi columnist.³ Winkler’s study guides us through Gümüşay’s identity transformation during the last five years: from the “silent muslima” who found her voice on the Internet (counter-public) to the public persona who gave voice to Muslim female activism against ignorance and violence.

On a final note, as editors we would like to inform our readers that beginning with volume 29 the subtitle of the *Yearbook* will read “Feminist and Gender Studies in German Literature & Culture.” This change, jointly agreed upon by the members of the editorial board and the editors, more accurately reflects the viewpoint and approach to research and scholarship as articulated on the journal’s website.

Once again, we want to express our sincere appreciation to the members of the editorial board for sharing their knowledge and providing guidance, and we welcome Barbara Kosta to the board. We are also deeply grateful to our dedicated colleagues who continue to give generously of their time and expertise in reading and reviewing the many submissions. In addition, the patience and support of our associates at the University of Nebraska Press and their professionalism in all aspects of production were, once again, invaluable to the successful completion of the editorial work.

Margarete Lamb-Faffelberger and
Elizabeth Ametsbichler, July 2013

Notes

1. Prager's study is indebted to theories articulated by Edward Said and Jacques Lacan. At this point, we would like to draw attention to Marchand's study on German Orientalism, in which she offers an alternative to Said's conception of Orientalism by focusing on the field of *Orientalistik* in Germany that dominated and shaped the scholarship in Oriental studies from 1830 to 1930. Marchand asserts that the scholarly fascination with the Orient in the nineteenth century was not exclusively based on imperialist policies, as Said claims (who actually left Germany out of his analysis), but rather on the understanding that the Orient is the birthplace of both Western religion and secular knowledge.

2. See Gümüşay's interview with Christoph Brammertz.

3. Gümüşay's farewell column, "Es war schön mit dir, liebe Kolumne," appeared on 24 June 2013.

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